

SUBJECT: DISTRIBUTION OF STREET IMPROVEMENT COSTS  
POLICY NO.: 200-01  
EFFECTIVE DATE: August 13, 1979

**BACKGROUND:****1. General**

Adequate streets to serve San Diego's developing neighborhood communities are essential to the orderly development of the City. Local and Collector Streets in developed areas are fixed by existing dedications and those in developing areas are established during the subdivision process. Arterial Streets, both existing and future, are delineated in the City's General Plan.

Financing construction and reconstruction of the City street system involves a division of costs between property owners and city tax revenues, particularly gas tax apportionments.

Improvements may be installed by city cash payment contract, city assessment contract, by private contract accomplished under a public improvement permit or subdivision agreement, or by combinations of such contracts.

**2. Definitions**

**ABUTTER:** Property that is adjacent and contiguous to a street. Normally abutting property is construed to extend to a depth of only 1/2 block back from the street.

**ARTERIAL:** A street whose primary purpose is to carry through traffic and provide a network connecting to the State Highway system. It is seldom less than a 4-lane facility and is further divided into:

**MAJOR STREET** - an arterial which still provides unrestricted access to abutting property.

**PRIMARY ARTERIAL** - an arterial which limits access to the street from abutting property.

**COLLECTOR STREET:** A street whose purpose is not only to provide for local traffic movement and access to abutting property, but also for movement between local and arterial streets. Usually it is a two-lane facility, but it may on occasion be four-lane.

**COMMUNITY:** A geographical area served either directly or indirectly by a collector or arterial street. The configuration of community areas is greatly influenced by a topography, but in a general sense a community is considered to extend on either side of an arterial street half the distance to the next arterial street. It includes properties which also have status as abutters, but no single parcel should be included in more than one community area.

Community areas are designated by the Council based upon recommendations derived from traffic and land use studies.

**LOCAL STREET:** A street whose primary purpose is to provide for local traffic movement and direct access to abutting property. Usually it is a two-lane facility.

**PLANNED URBANIZING AREA:** This area is defined in the Council adopted Progress Guide and General Plan as the newly developing communities not included in the Urbanized Area. The Planned Urbanizing Area is delineated on the Council adopted General Plan map.

**URBANIZED AREA:** This area is defined in the Council adopted Progress Guide and General Plan as the central portion of San Diego as well as the remaining older sections of the City. These areas are more specifically delineated on the Council adopted General Plan map.

**PURPOSE:**

To establish the distribution of costs for street improvements.

**POLICY:**

1. **General**

Division of the cost involved in improving the City street system is based upon the following fundamental considerations:

- a. That portion of the street system which provides for local traffic movement and access to abutting property should be the responsibility of the property owners who receive the benefit.

Streets which facilitate the movement of through traffic, or serve in a collector function, are of benefit to the general area, and this community should share in the cost.

Ordinarily, only features which expedite the movement of large volumes of traffic or which provide major service for other areas are of general benefit to the City and merit funding from tax sources.

- b. New localities being developed in either the Urbanized or Planned Urbanizing Areas should provide all street financing, identified either as the abutters' share or the community share, so that the City will not be required to spend money for improvements not of benefit to the general public.

However, older developed or partially developed localities in the Urbanized Area requiring construction of new streets or reconstruction of existing streets to bring them up to modern standards commonly justify a higher level of City financing because of special public benefit - such as reduced maintenance costs, reduction in traffic congestion or increased safety.

- c. Within the Planned Urbanizing Areas where there has been adopted by Council, a specific capital improvements program and financing plan, that financing plan will supercede this Policy.

2. **Basic Criteria:**

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

**CURRENT**

The distribution of improvement costs is based upon the following basic criteria, which are to be adhered to in all types of contracts unless there is a special condition which justifies a departure therefrom.

Abutter. Abutting property is responsible for improvements of local streets, or for that portion of collector and arterial streets which is equivalent to the width of a local street.

This responsibility is up to a 40' curb-to-curb width in a 60' right-of-way providing two 12' travel lanes and two 8' parking lanes in residential and commercial areas, and 50' curb-to-curb width in a 70' right-of-way providing two 12' travel lanes and two 13' parking lanes in industrial zones. Such improvements include right-of-way, grading, drainage structures, curbs, sidewalks, paving and landscaping (See Appendix 1 - Example 1).

Community. The community identified with a street is responsible for the additional cost of improving any new street to a four or six lane width, and for major structures. Such improvements include 24' to 62' right-of-way, depending upon the number of lanes required and width of median area, and associated grading, drainage facilities, structures, paving, median curb, channelization lanes, and median landscaping. An example of a major structure might be a bridge over a railroad. The community is also responsible for any improvement costs on sections of a street crossing another right-of-way, such as a state freeway, railroad or power transmission line, which has been determined not to be the responsibility of the other agency. With respect to major structures, when there is an existing unmet need the City may assume all, or a portion of, the community's share.

City. In the Urbanized Area, the City is responsible for traffic control features plus all costs of providing more than 4 travel lanes. Such improvements include right-of-way in excess of a standard 4-lane street, associated grading drainage facilities, structures, and paving, plus traffic signals, signs and safety lighting. In the Urbanized Area where traffic signals are required to accommodate a single major development, a sharing in the cost may be appropriate. In the Planned Urbanizing Area, the City has no responsibility for any of these costs, except that when there is an existing unmet need the City may assume all, or a portion of, the community's share of the cost of major structures.

3. General Categories

Following are the arterial and extra width collector street improvement categories which are generally encountered, and a summary of the cost allocation applicable.

- a. New Construction - Undeveloped Localities: (See Appendix 1 - Example II). This situation is encountered when new localities are being opened to development.

Abutters. Abutters are responsible for their basic share of costs except where access to the street is denied, in which case the property affected is relieved of its normal share of improvement costs.

Community. The Community is responsible for its basic share of costs, and, in addition, is responsible for the entire abutters' share where access either is denied due to physical factors,

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

**CURRENT**

such as a canyon location or double frontage lots, or is denied because of the street's designation as a limited access thoroughfare.

City. The City is responsible only for its basic share of costs, which occur only in the Urbanized Area.

- b. New Construction - Partially Developed Localities (See Appendix 1 - Example III). This situation usually involves construction of a new street in an undeveloped canyon which is surrounded by developed localities.

Abutters. Same as an undeveloped locality.

Community. Same as in an undeveloped locality, except that adjustments may be made in the Community share in the Urbanized Area because of special conditions. Such conditions vary widely but typically include such factors as :

The fact that construction of streets in partially developed localities is usually more expensive than in new localities, and allocating all basic costs to the community would constitute an unreasonable burden.

Because of topography or existing street patterns, the benefiting area may be so small that it would be inequitable to allocate all basic Community costs to it.

Ownerships, such as Federal property, may exist which the City cannot charge for improvement costs.

Partial financing may be available from other sources, such as Federal Aid Urban funds or grant funds which impose special requirements.

In such cases, a recommendation is developed regarding what portion of the basic share should be allocated to the Community, and the excess cost is shifted to the City (Urbanized Area only).

City. Same as in an undeveloped area, except that the City's share may be increased by the amount of the normal community share which is determined to be excess and which is shifted to the City (Urbanized Area only).

- c. Reconstruction or Widening of Existing Street (See Appendix 1 - Example IV). This situation usually involves an existing street which must be widened or rebuilt to bring it up to major street standards. In undeveloped localities, the curb, sidewalk or paved parking lanes ordinarily have not been installed previously. In developed localities, all abutting improvements may have been installed.

Abutters. Abutting property is responsible for its basic share of costs, except in the occasional instance where usable access is denied, in which case the affected property is relieved of its normal share of improvement costs. In localities in the Urbanized Area that are primarily

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

**CURRENT**

residential in character, the affected property may be relieved of its normal share of improvement costs.

The abutters' share of right-of-way costs usually have been taken care of by an original dedication.

If abutters' improvements have been installed previously, the improvement responsibility has been discharged. If existing abutters' improvements must be removed, the abutting property is not responsible for replacement construction in the new location.

Community. There is no community share unless factors, such as accelerated timing of scheduled improvements, or radical changes in land use since the street was opened, create conditions requiring the designation of a benefited area and the apportioning of a share of costs to that area. Situations of this kind are subject to special analysis and recommendation.

City. The City is responsible for its basic share of costs plus all other costs not apportioned to the abutters or the community.

4. Extra Width Construction to Obtain Access

a. New Construction

Where the City's General Plan calls for a new street to be constructed as a Primary Arterial which would deny access from fronting property, developers may gain access rights by constructing additional travel lanes entirely at their expense. Such additional lanes and areas where access rights are restored are subject to the limitations outlined in Council Policy 600-4, Standards for Rights-of-Way and Improvements Installed Therein. The extra costs involved include the excess right-of-way plus grading, drainage structures and paving for additional lanes. These costs become a Community responsibility and Abutters are charged for their normal basic share of costs in return for right of access to the street.

b. Reconstruction - To Regain Access:

Where a street has already been constructed as a Primary Arterial with access from fronting property denied, owners may elect to widen the street entirely at their expense in order to gain access. Here again, additional lanes required and areas where access rights will be permitted are subject to the limitations outlined in Council Policy 600-4, Standards for Rights-of-Way and Improvements Installed Therein. The extra costs involved include the excess right-of-way, removing and revising existing improvements as required, plus grading, drainage structures and paving for additional lanes. All such costs are a responsibility of the Abutters participating in the project.

HISTORY:

Adopted by Resolution R-135374 09/15/1956

Amended by Resolution R-169943 03/15/1962

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

**CURRENT**

Amended by Resolution R-173507 11/15/1962  
Amended by Resolution R-205514 05/04/1972  
Amended by Resolution R-212001 11/14/1974  
Amended by Resolution R-250028 08/13/1979

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
COUNCIL POLICY

CURRENT

